

NURSING AS A PROFESSION

By NELLIE SCHWARTZ

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NURSING should always be spoken of and looked upon as a profession, not as an occupation. A young woman entering this profession should begin with this understanding, and she should ever have in view the aim of securing proficiency in the profession; she should enter into and continue the work with the spirit of a student. This attitude once attained, the mind will then naturally be open to improvement.

Every profession has been made by men and women who think. These have toiled, have sacrificed, and have suffered. They have even been persecuted for striving to continue the one aim of their lives.

It is the scholar that the world and a profession wants, and nothing but study and the development of the mental powers can make, to any degree, the scholar. One thing only makes man better than the brute, and that is the power to develop the brain. It lies in our power to make the work of nursing a profession, and when we have once shown to the public that we are worthy of being recognized as professional women, then we can demand and expect protection from the State.

When the work of nursing was first organized by Florence Nightingale it was proper to think of it as an occupation. Then the art of nursing the sick was but as a helpless babe in the crib; it has been growing and thriving ever since, and now the present corps of nurses in America alone must so far outshadow the fondest anticipation of Miss Nightingale's that, doubtless, could she see for what her great work laid the foundation, she would be amazed.

We cannot hope to pay returns to those who have striven to make this profession what it is, who have taught us what there is in nursing, and who have opened such a field and established such a firm foundation for a profession, no more than "can the child make full returns to the mother whose life trembled in the balance at its birth, and whose tender kindness guided it through all its infancy." We cannot make returns to those of the past, but to those to come, and because we are plucking the fruit of what others have planted, we should in thankfulness plant for those yet to be.

The training-school cannot make the nurse unless she is willing to be made. We must acquire the greatest amount of mental power possible during our course of training in order to meet the demands of the public as well as that of our profession. Mental power, which in-

cludes power to understand, to reason, and to retain what has been learned, is a great requisite, not only to our success as professionals, but to the patient and to the community we are serving. We must be prepared to be called upon to advise in a case of emergency, and unless we have obtained this mental culture by study and observation we will be unable to administer effectively, as a consequence of our indifference to such culture. It is only at the time that we are able to administer that we have the opportunity to make returns to our predecessors in this calling by doing good to the generations yet to come. Mental power is, therefore, the foundation for our future success, and it is worthy of our best efforts in its behalf. We cannot live idle and careless lives during our time as students at the hospital, and later expect the patronage and esteem of intelligent people. Neither can we expect to make useful or proficient nurses to satisfactorily bear the responsibility entrusted to us by the physician in charge, unless we have acquired that one indispensable thing that is more precious than fine gold, *the power to think!*

We, as women, must work out our own salvation. No one educated woman and told her she was a co-worker with her brother. It was woman alone who awoke from her mental lethargy to the fact that she is her brother's equal, and once having had the scales fall from her eyes, she made rapid progress and at present stands on the same footing as her brother in the professional field. So with nursing. No one is going to tell us we should be professionalized; we must put this before the public ourselves. We should always think of ourselves as students, and we should be students perpetually, while persistently aiming to be recognized as professional women, the same as our brothers are recognized as professional men. We must impress upon the public mind that we are students, and we should assiduously strive to be recognized as such. This can be done by proving to the public that we are educated and that we are not merely machines automatically doing the bidding of the physicians. We must prove to the public that we are able to employ the theoretical part of our teaching in as practical a manner as need be. We must show that we have thoughts on subjects outside of our profession, that we can interpret satisfactorily the best literature, and that science and art have been touched upon in our ambitious search for wisdom and mental culture.

Is it for the sake of knowing how to do a few things mechanically, for the sake of securing a diploma, and for the sake of procuring the means of making a livelihood that so many of our young women remain in our hospitals for two or more years? No, we must feel confident that we are all that our diploma signifies—educated professional women ready to embark upon the great sea of experience, to alleviate suffering,

and to teach. When we have done this we can hope to attain the height of our ambition in this calling.

There is no one who can more effectively teach than a nurse. Her example will be imitated by those into whose society she is thrown. Therefore it behooves us to thoroughly prepare ourselves to make the best teachers possible.

It is the woman who thinks, the woman whose foundation is that of a student, that the nursing profession wants. Not until our training-schools are filled with such women can we ever hope to reach the true merit that this work is rightfully entitled to have. "Out on the intellectual sea there is room for every sail; in the intellectual air there is space for every wing."

WHAT MANNER OF WOMEN OUGHT NURSES TO BE?

By MARY AGNES SNIVELY

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WHEN the invitation from your principal and Committee of Arrangements reached me a fortnight ago, I was glad to have such conclusive evidence that though commercial reciprocity between the United States and Canada had not yet been wholly established, the reciprocal relations existing between nurses in the country which I have the honor to represent and those in this great Republic leave nothing to be desired.

I did not feel at liberty to decline the service to which I had been invited, because of my deep interest in my fellow-nurses and in the cause they represent.

I am here to-day as one of the pioneers, to extend to the Class of 1904—these new-century nurses—the right hand of fellowship, and to bid you, "God-speed."

To one who is privileged to look backward over the retrospect of more than twenty years of service, and who has kept actively in touch with the workers—in fact, has shared with earnest sympathy and coöperation the labors of all who have endeavored to promote the cause of higher education—*i.e.*, education in its broadest sense—among nurses, the future, the near future, is full of hope and promise. It is yours to be dedicated to the work which others thus far have nobly advanced.

What will be accomplished in this new century will depend quite as much upon what nurses *are* individually as upon what they *do*.

* Read at the graduating exercises of the Lakeside Hospital, Cleveland, O.